

VZCZCXRO6012  
PP RUEHPA  
DE RUEHDK #2212/01 3181528  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 141528Z NOV 07  
FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9562  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DAKAR 002212

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STATE FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL/AE AND INR/AA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/14/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [SOCI](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [SG](#)  
SUBJECT: LA RENTREE POLITIQUE 2007 - SUCCESSION SUCCESSION,  
SUCCESSION

REF: A. DAKAR 1859 B. DAKAR 1821 C. DAKAR 1541 D. 06 DAKAR 2271 E. 06 DAKAR 1925

Classified By: CHARGE D, AFFAIRES JAY T. SMITH FOR REASONS 1.4 (B)  
AND (D).

#### SUMMARY

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¶1. (C) In "Rentree Poltique 2006," we characterized the Senegalese opposition as self-pitying, the people as angry at the cost of living, youth as depressed about their prospects, and President Abdoulaye Wade as personalizing power. Not only has nothing changed since then, but the situation has worsened and will continue to worsen as the political and governing classes concentrate on the presidential succession battle instead of running the country. Other major upcoming events of note are the planned March summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and local elections in May. For their part, newly elected and appointed Deputies and Senators face an uphill battle to restore the credibility of a perennially supine and ineffective parliament. End Summary.

#### Qui est le Dauphin?

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¶2. (C) Ever since the octogenarian Wade won re-election in February 2007, the question of who will succeed him continues to rage unabated. Wade has at times both stimulated and purposefully confused this debate by cryptically hinting who he might designate as his successor and once went as far as stating that nobody but him could run Senegal effectively. Several names that have been liberally tossed around include National Assembly President and former Prime Minister Macky Sall, newly elected President of the Senate and incumbent Mayor of Dakar Pape Diop, Director of the Organizing Agency for the Organization of the Islamic Conference and First Son Karim Wade, former Prime Minister and PDS black sheep Idrissa Seck, as well as, but to a lesser extent, Interior Minister Ousmane Ngom.

¶3. (C) No matter who emerges as the heir apparent, all our contacts agree that this issue will dominate the country's political scene for the foreseeable future. Those who think that they have a shot will do whatever they can to remain in Wade's good graces; thus tough political and economic reforms will likely remain off the agenda. Meanwhile, backroom deals will be struck as each potential candidate looks to consolidate and solidify his respective position while trying to undermine those of perceived competitors. Amadou Barry, a newly chosen Senator who has been in the PDS since 1980 and a former deputy in the National Assembly, says the deep rifts exist in relations between the front-runners and that they will take whatever opportunities they can to thwart each other. He describes Macky Sall and Pape Diop as &Faux Amis (False friends) and noted that the entente cordiale between Karim Wade and Macky Sall was no longer cordial. It is also well-known that Osman Ngom and Idrissa Seck dislike

each other intensely and have cashed many times in the past. Overshadowing this debate is whether or not Wade will revamp the Democratic Party of Senegal (PDS) (Ref A). If he does and in effect resets the political clock to zero a new name might emerge as it did when he picked the obscure Hadjibou Soumare to be prime minister. In essence, Wade's main concern is to prevent the Socialist Party (PS) from returning to power.

#### Plots and counterplots

14. (C) Describing Wade as the "builder of road/n%Q`Q-QymQ3Q political climate had become poisoned with plots and counterplots. Tine argues that the political situation in Senegal today reminds him of that of Cote d'Ivoire's before its civil war: "In Cote d'Ivoire the war broke out because the ruling party had internal political problems, it had nothing to do with the situation in the country. Now Senegal is not at that point yet and is much more stable, but nobody knows how the internal power struggles in the PDS will end." Sergine Mbaye Thiam, former Socialist Deputy and the political guru for the Front Siggil Senegal (FSS) echoed this sentiment, contending that Wade no longer had control over his domain and that his advisors had too much influence over his decisions.

#### The Opposition Trying to find its way

15. (C) In 2006, we described the main opposition parties as wallowing in self-pity. Since then their plight has only worsened as a result of their virtual elimination from the political scene in the aftermath of their defeat in the February Presidential elections, which was compounded by a subsequent boycott of the June legislative elections which many people in Senegal interpreted as childish. The opposition parties, now pooled under the Front Siggil Senegal (FSS) umbrella, have no representation in any of Senegal's governing institutions and are now trying to revive their political relevancy by pushing for a "National Dialogue." However, while this idea has some support (REF B), the FSS is beginning to slowly disintegrate as each member party weighs its own political fortunes.

16. (C) Perhaps the most significant member of the coalition is Idrissa Seck's Rewmi party. Seck has suspended his party's activities with the FSS and has for sometime now been in negotiations with Wade to see whether a return to the PDS fold is possibility (REF C). Meanwhile, the smaller members of the FSS are all trying to position themselves to compete in the May 2008 local elections. The Socialist Party seems to be contemplating taking to the streets. While the opposition has long maintained that any election under the current system is open to fraud and abuse, they find themselves in a Catch-22 because if they do not compete in the local elections they will lose any remaining hope they have of remaining relevant. Meanwhile Wade's strategy to co-opt people into the PDS is working. For example the Socialist Mayor of Bakel (a border town with Mauritania) confessed to Poloff that he was seriously considering joining the PDS because the central government is not providing any funding to his city. The fact is that these kinds of defections are all too common in Senegal. For example, after the Socialist Mayor of Mbour switched to the PDS he was swiftly rewarded with a brand new SUV and an immediate flow of funds.

17. (C) Mustafa Dieng, the chairman of the board of state-owned Radio Television Senegal (RTS) and Wade friend, roundly dismissed the opposition, describing them as the "caviar" opposition. Dieng opined, "They are afraid of being a true opposition - why are they not on the streets protesting? Because they're afraid to get dirt on them. And their National Dialogue? What is the point? I mean do you really expect the President to implement policies crafted by the opposition? That's unreasonable."

## Local Elections

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18. (C) Unlike the Legislative elections it, is likely that every opposition party in Senegal, either under one banner or individually, will compete in local elections, even if some are now saying that they are only "considering it." These elections are about electing the person everybody knows in his or her local district and have very little to do with what is going on nationally or with party politics. That being said, the country's economic woes as well as what is expected to be a poor harvest may result in a backlash against the PDS as people look for someone to blame for their strife. Whoever wins locally, the biggest loser will be the national budget as government resources will once again be poured into expenditures designed to assist PDS candidates win elections along the lines of what the PDS did prior to the presidential and the largely uncontested legislative elections.

## The People Remain Angry and Disillusioned

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19. (C) The historically low turnout for the June legislative election underlined the average Senegalese's loss of faith in the country's legislative branch, which now faces an uphill battle to restore its credibility. Senator Barry agreed that the people had good reason to be angry at the National Assembly, but suggested that many did not know what they were doing as their work is seldom reported. Barry said that the Parliament needs to do a much better job in showcasing what it does and that the production of good laws, transparency, and financial oversight would help. Separately Latife Gueye, the fifth Vice President of the National Assembly, concurred, saying that in order to turn the National Assembly into a political force its members needed to take strong initiatives to show the people that they were working hard on their behalf. He then blamed the Socialist governments of the past for ruining the standing of a Deputy and praised Wade for returning respectability to the institution by giving them the means to their jobs, adding that the new Assembly is much more diverse and includes many experts in a variety of fields.

110. (C) In reality, the National Assembly boasts only two credible members of the opposition and the Senate none at all. Under these circumstances it is difficult to see how the parliament can hope to recover any of its credibility. Cheikh Bamba Dieye (protect), one of those opposition members, told poloff that he has absolutely no faith in the very institution he works in. "After a meeting when I challenged the government and the PDS, members of the PDS who had been arguing against me an hour earlier congratulated me for my position and confessed that they agreed with me," he told us. He also describes the PDS as cannibalistic. "They've grown so much and wiped out so many opponents that naturally they will begin to feed on themselves.<sup>8</sup> He went on to say that Wade was the only real glue holding the PDS together and that the disconnect between the PDS and the people was reminiscent of the late 1990's which led to the PS eventually being ousted from power by Wade in 2000.

## Comment

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111. (C) In reviewing last year's comments (REF D), the unavoidable conclusion is that little has changed in one year. Wade's grip on power has only increased, political dialogue is tongue-tied, and institutions enfeebled. The President's recent dissolution of the Council for Social and Economic Affairs (CRAES) for the apparent purpose of firing its chairman shows little regard for the institutions of state. Economically, the situation has worsened with a larger budget deficit, opaque and loosely structured privatizations or investment deals with Gulf countries, Iran, and China, higher prices for basic necessities and fuel, more frequent power cuts, and many young people who still prefer the perilous clandestine migration to Spain rather than

building a future at home. Rather than focusing urgent attention on these pressing issues, the ruling party has instead spent its time trying to sort out the succession battle. Prime Minister Soumare's rather anemic September presentation to the parliament of his government's priorities may be an indication that bold policies initiatives or major reforms are unlikely any time soon.

SMITH